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INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 005959

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/26/2016

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SUBJECT: PRT/ASADABAD: KORENGAL MURDERS CONTINUE, TALK OF
TRIBAL WARFARE IN RESPONSE, GOVERNOR HESITATES

REF: KABUL 5250

Classified By: A/PolCouns Martin Murphy for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

SUMMARY

1. (C) This year several employees of the Korengal Outpost (KOP) in Kunar Province have been murdered for their association with ISAF forces. Other Korengalis have been murdered this year because of their support for ISAF and the GOA. Following the recent killing of another four employees of the KOP, regional administrative leaders and tribal elders are discussing Afghan cultural sanctions (called lashkars), which run a continuum from moral condemnation to armed enforcement of the tribal elders, collective will against the Korengalis responsible for the murders, and possibly to drive them from the valley. But similar talk in the recent past has not led to action. The Governor of Kunar seems to favor waiting and consulting before taking more action to isolate the Korengal. END SUMMARY

2. (C) The Korengal Valley has been the scene of repeated violence against ISAF and ANA forces, and against Afghans working for the security forces. In the past two months 12 Afghan civilians working for the KOP have been murdered in the valley -- on October 19, eight KOP workers were killed (reftel), and on November 25, four truck drivers supplying the KOP were abducted in the valley and later killed. There were several more murders earlier in the year of civilians who were either providing services to the KOP or were otherwise perceived as supporting the ISAF/ANSF presence in the valley.

3. (C) While some of the victims have been residents of the Korengal, the twelve KOP employees and contractors killed in the past two months have been from elsewhere in Kunar, and their murders have incited the enmity of the population outside the Korengal.

Korengal Unlike Rest of Kunar

¶4. (C) The Korengal Valley lies in Manogai-Pech District of Kunar province. The population of the Pech Valley, into which the Korengal empties, is primarily of the Safi tribe. While Korengalis are considered members of the Safi tribe, unlike their neighbors, they are not Pashtun. Rather, they are a group of Nuristanis who migrated south in the early twentieth century and who later were accepted as nominal members of the Safi tribe. They speak a different language from their neighbors and have a longstanding reputation for hostility to outsiders. The Korengal has been a problem for some time. It is a safe haven for insurgents and is used for a transit route and staging ground for attacks in other areas. Fighters displaced from the Korengal during Operation Mountain Lion earlier this year have since trickled back in to the area, resuming activities supplemented by additional personnel. These groups constantly conduct harassing attacks against ISAF/ANSF elements and posts in the area.

¶5. (C) There have been several attempts over the past few months to engage the Korengal Shura to stop violence in the valley. Manogai-Pech District Governor Rahman has led these efforts, holding frequent shura meetings with elders from the Pech and Korengal valleys. However, agreements reached at these meetings, involving the Korengalis, ISAF, and the provincial government, have not stopped militant operations in Korengal. As reftel described, the Provincial Governor has outlined for us his ideas for organizing all the tribes surrounding the Korengal to cut off access to the valley for militants and their suppliers, a &moral8 lashkar, as opposed to an armed lashkar. Since the killings in October

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and November of KOP workers and contractors who were from various tribes and locales around Kunar Province, discussions by leaders in the Pech Valley have focused more on armed actions against the Korengalis.

Talk of Revenge

¶6. (C) At an emergency Shura called by Manogai-Pech District Governor Mohammed Rahman on November 29 in Nangalam, he confronted Korengali elders, demanding that they explain how they could claim to have no control over militants in their territory, noting that only non-Korengalis in the valley were being killed for association with ISAF and the GOA. Safi tribe elders at the meeting suggested that the Korengalis be expelled from the tribe, and told the elders from the Korengal that they must fight against militants in their valley or they would be considered to be part of the enemy themselves and would be killed.

¶7. (C) Separately, the PRT learned that families of the four murdered truck drivers, from Asmar and Asadabad, have warned the authorities that any Korengalis they found outside the Korengal Valley would be killed in retaliation for the murders.

¶8. (C) The PRT met the Governor on December 6 to discuss a security strategy to deal with the potential violence against the Korengalis. PRT told the Governor that an armed lashkar would not resolve the problem of the Korengal. Deedar declined to impose sanctions at this time, saying he wanted first to convene a security shura involving leaders from all over Kunar and the border areas to address the Korengal problem along with other issues. He asked for financial support from the PRT to host this shura. He made no reference to the efforts of District Governor Rahman to gather support for action against the Korengali elders, which suggests to the PRT that Deedar and Rahman are not coordinating. Since this discussion, there has been one shura involving elders from Kunar and several meetings with

District Administrators from areas surrounding the Korengal Valley, but no final decisions on traditional sanctions against the Korengal.

¶9. (C) The PRT has also advised the Governor to keep all the Korengal murders this year in the public eye, in order to remind Kunaris of the damage being done to their security and economic development by the Korengalis. Deedar agreed that it was important to keep this issue alive. He said that while addressing a UN forum on violence against women on December 5, he had also denounced the murders.

¶10. (C) Comment: The PRT has heard talk of Lashkars against the Korengal for some time but seen nothing but talk. We have also heard talk of renewed sanctions on the Korengal to limit access on all sides; but action keeps getting deferred.

However, the level of animosity towards the Korengalis and their pattern of ruthlessly killing other Kunaris connected to ISAF and the GOA lead us to anticipate some action in revenge. ISAF and the PRT are closely observing, but not participating in, the dialogue between GOA officials and tribal elders concerning lashkars. Properly employed, we believe they may be successful in separating the enemy leadership in the Korengal from the population and thus advance our common interests. End Comment.

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